

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: AP REPORTS RE "INSURGENT DEFECTORS AND RALLIERS"

REF: PHNOM PENH 3418

1. FOLLOWING IS PARAGRAPH OF AP TICKER ITEM ON CAMBODIA REFERRING TO THE RALLIERS ON ROUTE 4. BEGIN TEXT: (KAMBOL, CAMBODIA) -- THE CAMBODIAN MILITARY COMMAND REPORTS PHNOM PENH WAS SHELLED BY INSURGENT FORCES TODAY. IT WAS THE FIRST REPORTED REBEL SHELLING IN THREE WEEKS. MEANTIME, 15 MILES WEST OF THE CAMBODIA CAPITAL, A GROUP OF 742 FORMER INSURGENTS SWORE LOYALTY TO PRESIDENT LON NOL'S GOVERNMENT TODAY. IT WAS THE LARGEST DEFECTION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES SINCE THE CAMBODIAN WAR BEGAN IN APRIL 1970.

2. THE GROUP - NATIONALIST KHMER RUMDOS - SAID THEY HAD BECOME DISENCHANTED WITH FIGHTING ALONGSIDE KHMER ROUGE COMMUNISTS AND NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS.

3. A LON NOL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL SAYS TEN-THOUSAND MORE REBELS MAY CHANGE SIDES IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. END TEXT.

4. A SUBSEQUENT ITEM FROM AP READS: BEGIN TEXT: PHNOM
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PENH, CAMBODIA (AP) - GOVERNMENT ARMOR AND INFANTRY ARE

MOVING FROM THE EAST AND WEST AGAINST INSURGENT FORCES CONTROLLING FIVE MILES OF A HIGHWAY BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND THE ANCHOR TOWN OF ITS WESTERN DEFENSES, THE CAMBODIAN

COMMAND SAID TODAY.

KHMER ROUGE TROOPS CUT THE ROAD, HIGHWAY 4, AT THREE POINTS BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND KOMPONG SPEU, 30 MILES TO THE WEST. FIELD REPORTS SAID TWO GOVERNMENT POSITIONS WITHIN THE REBEL-HELD STRIP WERE UNDER SPORADIC ATTACK.

A EUROPEAN MILITARY OBSERVER SAID HE BELIEVED THE INSURGENTS CUT THE ROAD ALONG SUCH A LONG STRETCH BECAUSE THEY ARE MOVING MEN AND SUPPLIES ACROSS THE HIGHWAY. THE HIGHWAY, WHICH IS ALSO PHNOM PENH'S SUPPLY ROUTE FROM THE COAST, HAS BEEN BLOCKED FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS 42 MILES FROM THE CAPITAL.

FARTHER TO THE SOUTHWEST, THE COMMAND SAID THE GOVERNMENT AIR AND LAND COUNTEROFFENSIVE EAST OF THE TOWN OF KAMPOT WAS CONTINUING, BUT IT DID NOT SAY HOW THINGS WERE GOING. TWO THOUSAND TROOPS FROM PHNOM PENH WERE FLOWN TO THE TOWN SUNDAY AFTER THE KHMER ROUGE OVERRAN FOUR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS FOUR TO SIX MILES EAST OF THE TOWN.

THE COMMAND SAID GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS 47 MILES SOUTH OF PHNOM PENH RECAPTURED PHUM BOVIENG VILLAGE AND RECLAIMED 330 VILLAGERS WITH 188 CATTLE.

MEANWHILE, A REBEL LEADER CAMPED AT A TEMPLE COMPOUND ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF PHNOM PENH WITH 600 OF HIS FOLLOWERS TOLD NEWSMEN HE WAS NEGOTIATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF 3,600 REBELS WHO WANT TO CHANGE SIDES. THE MAN, UNG BUN LEANG, 32, SAID HE AND THE OTHER ARE KHMER RUMDOS - NATIONALISTS WHO SAY THEY DO NOT SUPPORT EXILED PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK AND WANT TO GET THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS OUT OF CAMBODIA. END TEXT. KISSINGER

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